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NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS

THE NURSES' ASSOCIATION OF CHINA

By ALICE CLARK

Shanghai, China

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Nurses' Association of China was opened in Shanghai, on Tuesday, June 30, with the president, Nina D. Gage, of Changsha, in the chair. The outside temperature was hot but was as nothing compared to the warmth of enthusiasm and comradeship manifest amongst the delegates in the conference room. Nurses came from eight provinces and twenty-two different hospitals, both Government and Mission, were represented but chiefly by American and British nurses, only one Chinese nurse being present. The language used was English but ere long it is confidently expected that Chinese nurses will be able to be present at these annual conferences in large numbers, when the language used may be their own tongue.

The conference was opened by a short devotional service, conducted by Dean Walker of the Shanghai English Cathedral. In a very helpful address he besought the members of the nursing profession never to sever the vital connection between professional ability and religious devotion. All nurses and doctors, whether professed Christians or not, were doing God's work, consciously or unconsciously, because "gifts of healing" came from Him. If they were Christians their work was the higher, because they could minister to the soul as well as the body. "Never say, 'Man has a soul,' say, 'Man is a soul and has a body.'"

The remainder of the session was given up to hearing papers on social service work and kindred subjects. A paper was read by Mrs. Matheson, secretary of the Women's Home, on Rescue Work Among the Foreign Women in Shanghai. This was followed by a talk from Miss Henderson who is in charge of the Children's Refuge in the same port. She told a touching tale of the plight of small slave girls, ill-treated little daughters-in-law and numbers of children rescued from houses of ill-fame in Shanghai and other places. So often when they arrive at the Refuge, their condition is pitiful, underfed and poorly clad, suffering from wounds and bruises and broken limbs, the results of cruelty. Most of them are mentally numbed and dull at first even to appreciating kindness. With infinite patience and much love they are gradually taught, not only ordinary school subjects but also house-

hold duties and laundry work, mat and shoe making, etc. Only one servant is kept in the Institution, the girls doing all the work. Just now the Refuge is full to overflowing, there is not "breathing space" for another child! The work depends on voluntary contributions for its support.

Miss Gordon, of the American Church Mission Hospital, Shanghai, then gave a paper on the Social Service work done by nurses in America, and told of the tremendous advance of hospital extension work during the last four years. The fields of work are endless and the variety of people helped multitudinous. About 1400 cities in the States now have nursing social service in force.

On the morning of July 1 reports from the officers of the Association were presented. The work of the past year has been the completion of organization and the uniting of members more closely than has been possible before. The keen president and the energetic secretary have "Gone on going on" and the Association is steadily increasing in membership, force and usefulness. The past year has seen the printing and circulating of the "Uniform Curriculum and Regulations for Examinations" for candidates for the Association diplomas in general nursing and in midwifery. This union scheme is but paving the way for a national examination and diploma, which, it is expected, may emanate from the Government before many years are past.

Three papers were given and discussion took place on Home Leave; How Best to Utilize it in England, in America and in Europe, when helpful suggestions were made by members who had already been on furlough and had taken advantage of the post-graduate courses and other facilities for getting up to date. These papers were read by Mrs. Burnip (England), Miss Ogden (America) and Miss Hoolande (Germany).

Miss Tomlinson, late superintendent of the nurses at Harlem Hospital New York, gave a talk on Difficulties in Modern Training Schools at Home, in which she dealt mainly with the problem of lack of suitable candidates and gave some probable reasons for the shortage and some possible aids to the solution of the problem.

Miss Simpson, of the Methodist Episcopal Mission Hospital, Foochow, gave a paper on the training of Chinese pupil nurses. She contrasted the old days and the present day training methods in the home lands and pointed out that we must let our pupils here profit by the lessons we have learned during the years. She suggested that the duties which unskilled hands can do, be done by ward maids; that the nurse be given good sleeping quarters and the best of food; that she have time to study and not be expected to pick up her theoretical knowledge at

odd moments; that she be turned out at the time of her graduation, abounding in life and health. She said in part:

Until customs in China change, a nurse can only be a half nurse, for she must care for both sexes before she can be a complete nurse. The care of the sick has been looked upon as work only fit for coolies, but the status of a nurse is gradually being raised. As long as sickness is looked upon in so many places as devil-possession, nursing cannot take the place it does in Christian lands. Chinese women have not the constitution of their western sisters. After centuries of being kept indoors with little bound feet, one or two generations will not make them strong. They must be in the future, the teachers of the women of China. We want them to help clean out these insanitary streets, deal with contagious diseases and get such a number in the field that the law makers of China shall be compelled to listen and to help them make this land a sanitary land.

Miss Withers, A.B.F.M.S., of Swatow, wrote a paper on The Chinese Graduate Nurse and Her Opportunities. She said:

China for the most part does not know that she needs trained nurses but that is today and not tomorrow. The graduate nurses' opportunity in China is endless. They must be trained to take the foreigners' places as superintendents and also as head nurses. At present the majority of the Chinese people are too poor to use nurses in their private houses, save in a few isolated instances. But the great field is dispensary and settlement work. She can be sent out into villages and towns from the main hospitals and work, perhaps, in connection with women's clubs or schools. She can teach the care of the sick, the dressing of simple wounds, the care of the eyes and teeth, care of children and new born infants, besides daily dispensary duties. As a visiting nurse she will be invaluable and as she goes about she can teach cleanliness and domestic hygiene. If the nurses are trained how to lead the people to Christ, a sum in multiplication is started in work for Christ which cannot be estimated.

These papers were followed by a half-hour questionnaire, when much useful and practical information was given and ideas and plans interchanged. One of the chief, pleasurable profits gained by delegates to the conference has been the interchange of ideas and plans, whether in the more public meetings and over tea cups or in friendly discussions in the tramcars and along the roads. On all hands is heard, "How do you do this?" "What do you do under such and such circumstances?" "What conveniences have you for so and so?" Problems which never confront the matrons or superintendent at home have to be dealt with out here; the fumigation of bedding without a bakehouse, the disposal of refuse where there is no sewage system, the supply of sterile water when the only water available is that from a muddy river. These and many other subjects have been thoroughly discussed but the main subject has been, How can we raise the status of the Chinese nurse, develop our standard of training and improve our teaching methods?

The morning session on July 2 opened with a paper on Midwifery Training for Chinese Nurses, read by Hope Bell, of the London Mission Hospital, Hankow. Midwifery training inland is only possible at present at hospitals which have been long established and where the nurses are sufficiently well known to be called out to normal cases. Only hospitals in large cities have a sufficiently large practice to be able to take pupil midwives. In country stations, in too many places, there is no foreign nurse and the doctor in charge is only called out to abnormal cases, those, too, generally "in extremis" after native women have done their best and their worst. In England, lying-in patients come into the hospital for ten to fourteen days but in China if a woman can be persuaded to leave her home for the event she must remain in hospital for a month as her friends will not allow her to cross the threshold of her home for one month after the birth of her baby. The extra time in the ward, although it keeps out a fresh patient, is utilized in teaching her how to feed and bathe her baby and how to generally care for it and deal with its minor ailments.

Miss Loader of Foochow gave a paper on The Duties of a Matron in China. She remarked that the home hospitals are usually well staffed with sisters and nurses who all have some share in the education of probationers and assistants are available to help with the administrative work, with the laundry and storeroom departments but in China it is quite different. One foreign trained nurse is all the hospital can boast, except in a very few isolated instances. Thus it comes about that the whole of the teaching and training, plus the oversight of the departments and employees has to be done with one pair of eyes and hands.

A paper followed by Miss Hood, Soochow, on the difficulties which meet matrons out here.

Perhaps the best paper of the conference, and certainly the most helpful one for the Nurses' Association of China as a whole, was one by Miss E. Chung, late of City Hospital, London, and now matron of the Government Hospital, Tientsin. The topic was How Can the Nurses' Association Help China. After a grateful appreciation of efforts made she gave many useful suggestions for enlarging the coats and raising the standard of nursing thus helping China to a body of trained Chinese women to minister to the sick and supplying one of China's sorest needs.

Various suggestions were made such as,

Every trained nurse already in China should belong to the Association, each province having its own branch. We should aim, each year, to send a suitable girl to England or America for full training.

In China, for some years to come, the training must be one-sided, for male nurses are essential in most of the men's hospitals. Chinese girls have not yet taken up that side of nursing. Another point which Miss Chung emphasized which was gratefully received was,

We nurses must keep our ideals and standard of nursing. We must not lower it, excusing ourselves by saying that the Chinese do not appreciate it and will not like it. If they do not like it we must educate them to appreciate the best. There is no use of trying to help China unless we try to improve the standard of living. We must remember that it is not because they are Chinese that their standards are low but because they have not seen better things. So let us show them better things. I beg each member, you who are giving your services so generously, to do it with the spirit of true helpfulness, to treat the Chinese like human beings, to raise the standard of nursing, to raise the people to enjoy this standard, to forget race differences, to remember that we are all Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, whether we be negroes, Chinese, Americans or English. If God makes no distinction why should we do so?

Let us, then, take pains not to lower the standard of the nursing profession. The Association can be the means of raising it. My one desire for all of us is that our Association may be the means of really helping China and helping her in the right way for we can supply one of her greatest needs.

The conference this year has been by far the best the Nurses Association of China has ever had. It was more representative and more enthusiastic and it will be more far reaching in its results than any previous gathering. The Association is still in its childhood, the members will not say infancy, but they look forward with steadfast hope to the day when they will be affiliated with the International Council of Nurses and when China will have fully trained and devoted nurses from end to end of her great Republic. "Tomorrow's strength will be very largely the heritage of today's patient striving."

The members of the Nurses' Association of China are all fully trained nurses, whether Chinese, English or American or any other nationality. The officers for the ensuing year represent three nationalities, Chinese, American and English. With their united efforts they hope to bring the training schools for nurses in China to a high level and by experience gained they hope to avoid many weak points that have hampered the profession in its onward course in other lands.